

## Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08  
INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 SS-15 NSCE-00  
PA-01 PRS-01 USIE-00 SP-02 /062 W  
-----120493 241737Z /43 47

O 241635Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9681  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 0551

PARIS AND BRUSSELS FO LABATT

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: ELAB, TS, LY, ICFTU  
SUBJ: NOUIRA FACES UGTT THREAT CONFIDENTLY

REF: TUNIS 0534

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER HEDI NOUIRA, IN AN OVERVIEW  
OF THE CURRENT GOT-UGTT CONFRONTATION, DEPLORED THE IN-  
FLUENCES WHICH ARE IMPELLING UGTT LEADER HABIB ACHOUR TO THREATEN  
A GENERAL STRIKE SOON, ONE NOUIRA IS CONFIDENT ACHOUR  
WILL LOSE. HE EMPHASIZED MASMOUDI/LIBYAN INFLUENCE DESPITE  
A RECENT ASSURANCE FROM QADHAFI OF LIBYAN NEUTRALITY. HE  
SPOKE DISPARAGINGLY OF THE GAUCHE CONDUCT OF OHE VISIT OF  
ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY KERSTEN. END SUMMARY.

2. ALTHOUGH I WAS GIVEN AN AUDIENCE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER  
TO DISCUSS A FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE, HE SEIZED UPON MY OPENING  
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PLEASANTRIES CONCERNING HIS CURRENT HEAVY DOMESTIC PROBLEMS  
TO LAUNCH UPON A TYPICALLY WELL-ORGANIZED EXPOSITION OF  
HIS OVERVIEW OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S MAJOR PROBLEM, ITS CONFRON-  
TATION WITH THE UGTT AND THE THREAT OF A GENERAL STRIKE.

3. GENERAL STRIKE: NOUIRA TOLD ME THAT THE UGTT'S DECISION  
TO STAGE A GENERAL STRIKE HAD BEEN TAKEN ON SUNDAY, JANUARY

22, AND ITS COMMUNIQUE, WHICH HE HAD NOT YET SEEN, CONTAINED MORE OF THE SAME "UN-TUNISIAN" LANGUAGE THAT HAS CHARACTERIZED

OTHER RECENT UGTT EMANATIONS. WHILE THE COMMUNIQUE FIXES NO DATE FOR THE STRIKE, THE PRIMIN BELIEVED THEY HAD CHOSEN FRIDAY, JANUARY 27. WHEN I SAID THE TIME ELEMENT HARDLY ALLOWED TIME TO PREPARE SO SERIOUS A MOVE, THE PRIMIN AGREED AND ADDED THAT IT PROVIDED GOOD EVIDENCE OF "ACHOUR'S MENTAL DETERIORATION", A PROCESS HE CLAIMED HE HAD OBSERVED IN HIS OLD FRIEND FOR THREE YEARS NOW.

4. NOUIRA TOLD ME THAT, WHEN THE UGTT ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL HAD FINISHED DRAFTING ITS COMMUNIQUE SUNDAY, ACHOUR HAD TOLD THE MEMBERS: "THIS IS IT. IF WE WIN IT IS WE WHO WILL FORM THE NEW GOVERNMENT. IF WE LOSE WE'RE FINISHED." THE PRIMIN THEN SAID, "FUNDAMENTALLY, MR. AMBASSADOR, THIS IS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT. THEY PLAN TO HAVE ACHOUR SITTING IN THIS OFFICE". HE WENT ON TO EXPRESS HIS CONFIDENCE THAT THE GOT AND THE DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY WOULD PREVAIL, THAT THEY WERE READY FOR ALL CONTINGENCIES AND THAT THE PRESENT UGTT LEADERSHIP WOULD RECEIVE CLEAR PROOF THAT THEY HAD NO FOLLOWING IN THE UNHAPPY COURSE THEY HAVE CHOSEN.

5. I TOLD NOUIRA THAT THE FLOOD OF TELEGRAMS FROM LABOR ORGANIZATIONS BEING PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS THESE DAYS SEEMS TO INDICATE STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE UGTT LEADERSHIP  
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BY MANY IN OHE RANKS. HE ASSURED ME THAT THE TELEGRAMS WERE ALL GENUINE AND THAT I WOULD SOON SEE PROOF OF THIS IF, AS HE EXPECTED, ACHOUR PERSISTED WITH THE PROJECTED GENERAL STRIKE. "IT WILL, IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING, BE TANTAMOUNT TO AN ELECTION", HE SAID.

6. FOREIGN INFLUENCE: I THEN TOLD THE PRIMIN THAT I HAD BEEN SURPRISED BY THE STRONG EMPHASIS THE PSD HAD BEEN GIVING TO FOREIGN OR OUTSIDE INFLUENCE EXERTED ON THE UGTT LEADERSHIP. NOUIRA SAID THAT I WAS SURELY AWARE OF THE LIBYAN MONEY THAT (EX-FONMIN) MOHAMED MASMOUDI HAD RAISED FOR THE UGTT AND OF THE "ALLIANCE" ACHOUR HAD MADE WITH THE FRENCH CGT FOR ITS HELP IN ORGANIZING A CHAIN OF UGTT CELLS AMONG TUNISIAN EXPATRIATE WORKERS IN EUROPE. I RECALLED THAT HE HAD TOLD ME OF THE LATTER AS FAR BACK AS OCTOBER AND THAT HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR. HAD INDICATED THAT LIBYAN INVOLVEMENT IN UGTT AFFAIRS HAD BEEN DOCUMENTED. THIS WAS ALL TRUE, SAID NOUIRA. HE THEN REPORTED HE HAD RECEIVED THE LIBYAN CHIEF OF MISSION (ZENTANI) A FEW HOURS BEFORE. ZENTANI HAD COME WITH THE PERSONAL ASSURANCE OF QADHAFI THAT LIBYA WAS IN NO WAY INVOLVED IN THE UGTT'S CURRENT CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOT WHICH COULD BE SURE OF

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 0551

PARIS AND BRUSSELS FOR LABATT

LIBYAN "NEUTRALITY". NOUIRA HAD TOLD ZENTANI THAT LIBYAN MONEY LAY BEHINTLOQCH OF TUNISIA'S CURRENT DIFFICULTIES, BUT HE WAS GLAD TO HAVE COL. QADHAFI'S ASSURANCES AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE. NOUIRA ADDED THAT, IF ZENTANI RUNS TRUE TO FORM, HE WILL ASK FOR ANOTHER AUDIENCE BEFORE THE END OF THE WEEK TO REPEAT EXACTLY WHAT HE HAD SAID TODAY.

7. I TOLD NOUIRA THAT I TOO HAD BEEN STRUCK BY THE MARXIST QUALITY OF THE UGTT NATIONAL COUNCIL'S FINAL COMMUNIQUE (TUNIS 0220) AND ASKED HIM HOW EXTENSIVE DOM-MUNIST INFLUENCE WAS IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT. NOUIRA SAID IT WAS MORE A QUESTION OF COUMMUNIST SYMPATHIZERS, "LIKE BACCOUCHE AND A FEW OTHERS WE KNOW", NOT REAL COMMUNISTS PERHAPS BUT PEOPLE WEDDED TO THE OARXIST-LENINIST PHILOSOPHY. MORE SERIOUS IN HIS EYES, HE SAID, WAS THE SPREADING INFLUENCE OF BAATHISM, WHICH IS "SOMETHING THAT IN AN ARAB COUNTRY  
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IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO HANDLE". HE STATED THAT THE GOT ALSO KNEW WHO WERE THE BAAATHISTS IN THE UGTT. HE THEN SAID THAT THE PATTERN OF RECENT EVENTS HAS ALSO SERVED TO PUT THE GOT ON GUARD AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SOVIETS ARE BEGINNING TO PLAY A ROLE IN TUNISIA AND POSSIBLY IN THE MAGHREB GENERALLY. THIS SUSPICION WOULD BE EXAMINED VERY CAREFULLY, HE CONCLUDED.

8. KERSTEN VISIT: I ASKED PRIMIN NOUIRA WHETHER HE HAD

SPOKEN YET TO ICFTU SECRETARY GENERAL OTTO KERSTEN. HE TOLD ME THT HAD HAD ONE LONG TALK THIS MORNING AND THEY PLANNED TO MEET AGAIN JANUARY 23 BEFORE KERSTEN LEFT. CONTRARY TO PRIOR PLANS KERSTEN WISELY HAD NOT HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE ON ARRIVAL, SAID NOUIRA, AND POSSIBLY HE WOULD NOT BEFORE HE LEAVES. KERSTEN CLAIMED HE WAS HERE TO "STUDY" THE TUNISIAN SITUATION AND FRANKLY ADMITTED HIS HOPE OF RETAINING UGTT MEMBERSHIP IN ICFTU. NOUIRA CONFESSED HE ZWAS UNIMPRESSED BY KERSTEN'S INTELLIGENCE OR HIS ABILITY TO GRASP THE SUBTLETIES AND NUANCES OF OHE CURRENT SCENE WHICH PRIMIN HAD TRIED TO EXPLAIN. KERSTEN'S ITALIAN ASSISTANT (UNNAMED) SEEMED MORE IMPRESSIVE INTELLECTO IP9, HE SAID. KERSTEN HAD SWALLOWED ACHOUR'S VERSION OF RECENT TUNISIAN EVENTS, HAD TO BE DISABUSED AND FINALLY ADMITTED PICTURE WAS MORE COMPLEX THAN THE HAD THOUGHT. NOUIRA HOPED KERSTEN WOULD DEPART BETTER EDUCATED AND RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO MIX IN TUNISIAN AFFAIRS AT THIS DELICATE JUNCTURE, ESPECIALLY SINCE GOT SHARED KERSTEN'S OBJECTIVE OF KEEPING UGTT IN ICFTU.

9. COMMENT: HEDI NOUIRA GAVE EVERY IMPRESSION OF BEING THE CONFIDENT MAN IN CHARGE. MY TALK WITH HIM SERVED TO CONFIRM INDICATIONS FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THE BASIC GOT STRATEGY CONFIDENTIAL

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IS TO DISCREDIT THE UGTT LEADERSHIP, HAVE IT REPLACED BY LOYALISTS, BUT NOT TO DESTROY THE ORGANIZATION, THEREBY DISCOURAGING OTHERS--READ MASMOUDI, BELKHODJA AND ACHOUR --FROM EFFORTS TO BUILD A RIVAL POLITICAL PARTY USING THE UGTT AS A BASE. I SUSPECT THAT THE OFT-RUMORED CONCEPT OF FOSTERING A COMPETING LABOR MOVEMENT IS ALSO VERY MUCH ON THE BACK BURNER.  
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## Message Attributes

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